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## Active lifestyle becoming a welcome lesson

### Gold Medal Schools: Health-focused program

By Ana Breton  
The Salt Lake Tribune

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DRAPER - At Summit Academy, students run laps during recess and are given pencils instead of candy when they do something good.

Most surprising: They are not complaining.

This is part of the Gold Medal Schools plan, a health-focused program sponsored by the Utah Department of Health. Schools receive Gold Medal status once they have completed criteria that include adding an extra 90 minutes per week of physical activities, lectures about health and an anti-tobacco policy.

The department recently announced \$67,000 in cash incentives, in amounts from \$200 to \$1,000, which will be used to buy P.E. equipment and tobacco-prevention resources at the 287 schools that participate.

An estimated 22.5 percent of elementary school students in Utah were at an unhealthy weight in 2006, according to state research.

In Gold Medal Schools, students take part in activities - such as soccer or basketball games - during two 30-minute slots every week, in addition to the usual recess breaks. Ditching candy for pencils has won positive feedback, even from kids, said Jessica LaNeave, a fifth grade teacher at Summit Academy.

Since the academy began the program a year ago, students have changed their eating and exercising habits. Some have started running laps during recess, LaNeave said.

"Their parents will even come during recesses to run laps with the students," she said. "It's really fun to see the

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Jessica LaNeave lost 20 pounds participating in Gold Medal... (Rick Egan/The Salt Lake Tribune )



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parent involvement."

Students at Summit Academy have also turned the program into a competition. Whichever grade tallies up the most miles run at the end of the month receives a "free dress day," where students switch their uniforms for regular clothes.

Every year, the students with the most miles tallied up receive new bikes and helmets, along with other prizes.

And although teachers are not required to follow the program, they have also become involved in living healthier lives. Teachers held a contest to see who could lose the most inches off their waist in one year.

LaNeave won the challenge, losing two and a half inches and 20 pounds.

She has also missed fewer work days. She was diagnosed with lung disease in 10th grade and is normally out of work during winter months due to bronchitis or pneumonia. This year, she only missed one week of school.

"I definitely attribute my success to getting active again," LaNeave said. "I'm also doing it because I don't want to be a hypocritical teacher, and I want to show my students that I'm not too old and I can still do things."

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